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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [RU](#) [GG](#) [FR](#) [UN](#)  
SUBJECT: SARKOZY PLANS ON GEORGIA-RUSSIA CONFLICT

Classified By: DCM Mark A. Pekala for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) Summary. In a September 5 meeting with U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker, Francois Richier, the Strategic Affairs Advisor to President Sarkozy, discussed EU plans for the September 8 meeting with Russian President Medvedev (other topics will be reported septel). Present for the September 8 meetings in Moscow will be Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the European Council, Manuel Barroso, Head of the European Commission, and Javier Solana, the Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to the European Union. Richier stressed repeatedly that the key concern for President Sarkozy and the EU is to have Russian forces withdraw back to their pre-August 7 positions as soon as possible and to eliminate any Russian pretext for delay. The French President hopes to use his personal relationship with Medvedev to obtain full implementation of the 6-point cease fire plan (to include withdrawal of forces and deployment of an international monitoring mission) within a swift timeframe. The GOF also supports using the already established OSCE and UN missions to get observers on the ground as soon as possible, while also developing a robust ESDP mission as a longer-term goal. Richier agreed that President Sarkozy would push the Russians for agreement on the language of the AOR, which has been fully agreed upon by all the participating OSCE countries except for Russia. Ambassador Volker noted that the question of MAP for Georgia should not be a distraction to the current crisis, but NATO should think about what signal it will be sending in December, especially if Russian troops are still present on sovereign Georgian territory. Richier expressed concern that Russia would stop cooperating with the west to pressure the Iranian regime on non-proliferation. Amb. Volker advocated continuing NATO-Russia cooperation only on specific needs, to show that as long as Russian troops remain in Georgia, it is not "business as usual." End summary.

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OVERCOMING RUSSIAN OBSTACLES  
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12. (C) Richier stated that the Russians are not abiding by their ceasefire commitments in good faith and are using any pretext to publicly justify their continued presence in sovereign Georgian territory. The GOF assessment is that the Russian government will take any opportunity to entrench their forces on the ground. Richier hoped that the upcoming visit of the NAC to Tbilisi would not be overplayed in Georgia, as Georgia needs to understand that it cannot give the Russian forces the pretexts they seek. Ambassador Volker noted that the NAC visit to Georgia is "totally normal" based on NATO's partnership with Georgia and that Russian attempts to use it as an excuse to continue its actions are just one

more attempt by the GOR to "move the bar." Richier agreed.

13. (C) Richier also noted that NATO has several roles to play in responding to the conflict, to include reassuring Georgia of its support and re-establishing Tbilisi's defacto control over the maximum area of sovereign Georgian territory possible. Richier noted that the Russians will use every pretext to keep their troops in their current positions and are already seizing on the presence of the American naval ships delivering humanitarian aid as another excuse to stay in place. Amb. Volker noted that the \$1 billion in aid promised by the USG is all non-military assistance. That said, Georgia is a sovereign country with the right to its own military, so Russia cannot claim that it is illegitimate to assist Georgia in rebuilding its military. Amb. Volker suggested that NATO could be helpful to Georgia's military in many useful ways, short- or long-term, including: education and training, airspace management (since Georgian capabilities were destroyed by the Russians), de-mining, establishing a command and control structure, as well as helping Georgia to develop a national defense capability that is professional and defensive in nature.

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FUTURE OF GEORGIA MAP  
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14. (C) Richier inquired whether the U.S. support for Georgia to obtain a Membership Action Plan (MAP) has been postponed in light of the conflict, observing that Germany remains adamantly opposed. Amb. Volker noted that while German opposition to MAP remains, FM Steinmeier was taken aback by the Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This may affect the German position. Further, while the USG is consciously not pushing today on the issue of MAP, in order to keep attention focused on solving the immediate crisis, NATO should think very hard about the signal it would be sending to Russia and its neighbors if Russia is still occupying the same Georgian territory at the time of the December NATO FM Summit, and NATO refused to grant a MAP.

15. (C) Amb. Volker also noted that in the longer term, NATO will need to think about defense planning for the Baltic region. The Baltic states and Poland are feeling vulnerable following the Russian invasion of Georgia. Such planning would reassure them to know that NATO is fully prepared to carry out its Article 5 commitments, just as it does for other areas of NATO territory. This should not be seen as rushed or provocative, but as NATO's routine business. Richier agreed that this is largely a problem of perception.

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NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONS  
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16. (C) Amb. Volker stated that there is a division in NATO about maintaining continued NATO-Russia working relationships. Germany has a strong view that NATO should keep up its regular commitments, while the USG believes NATO should be more selective about areas of NATO-Russia cooperation, to prevent the view that it is "business as usual." The U.S. feels strongly that continued cooperation should only concentrate on specific needs such as cooperation on Afghanistan, while routine business should be postponed until Russia lives up to its commitments. We do not advocate "shutting down" permanently the NATO-Russia mechanism, but non-essential work should be frozen until Russia takes the necessary actions. If there is still not movement of Russian forces by the end of September, the situation "could be ugly."

17. (C) Amb. Volker stated his view that Russia is attempting to re-establish its former sphere of influence. Georgia is the most immediate case due to Russian antipathy to Georgian President Saakashvili and Moscow's ultimate goal remains regime change in Georgia. In addition, their actions are a useful signal to others in the neighborhood (particularly Ukraine), as well as to the EU and the U.S., that Russia is

back and will assert itself more aggressively. Richier mused that statistics such as the declining Russian population, lack of investment in infrastructure and other factors show that while Russia may be strong in terms of oil and gas wealth today, the long-term prognosis for Russia is not good.

Amb. Volker agreed, but noted that in the short term, the Russians feel strong, and are fueled also by an emotional response to Georgia and a resentment of Russian weakness in the 1990's.

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RUSSIAN SUPPORT ON IRAN  
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18. (S/NF) Richier stated bluntly that it is a fact that "the west needs Russia" to address the nuclear threat from Iran. Iran will become increasingly dangerous and the GOF worries that if the situation with Russia deteriorates further, the Russians will stop supporting pressure on Iran. This could lead to a real danger by early next year, because the Russians have always calculated that Iran is further behind on developing nuclear capabilities than is believed in the west. They may feel that there is sufficient time ahead if they want to punish us by freezing cooperation on Iran for now. The GOF believes we need another UN Security Council Resolution on Iran. Absent a new UNSCR by February 2009, France believes our non-proliferation efforts will suffer. Amb. Volker agreed that this is a concern, noted that Russia's long-term interest in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon remains; while on the other hand, Russia has been playing the Iran negotiations to its advantage even before the Georgia crisis.

19. (U) Ambassador Volker reviewed and cleared this message.

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